

Getting Word Out on Defense Reform Initiative

JIM GARAMONE

WASHINGTON — The Defense Reform Initiative will be successful if all DoD workers understand what it's about, Defense Secretary William Cohen said during a March 1 news conference.

Getting the word out about the initiative is tough, however. Defense reform is not a glamorous subject, but it is crucial to the long-term success of the Defense Department and has a direct impact on the jobs of thousands of DoD civilians and service-members.

Stan Soloway, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition Reform, took the reform message directly to DoD military and civilian employees through an electronic town hall meeting March 4. The "meeting" took place in a large television studio here with a studio audience of about 150 people. But audiences around the world also watched and could interact with the principals via E-mail, phone, or fax.

The meeting featured an interview with Deputy Defense Secretary John Hamre followed by a panel of DoD experts answering questions from the studio and electronic audience. Officials estimate a global viewership of about 20,000 people. Those who missed the show can still view it, because the program is available at <http://www.acq.osd.mil/ar/>.

The Defense Acquisition University sponsored the town hall meeting. Held at a commercial studio here, the broadcast was beamed around the world. A news release went out electronically and via message to installations, telling them where to aim satel-

lite receivers to obtain the signal. In addition, the broadcast was digitized and placed on DefenseLink, DoD's Web site. Web viewers using a common streaming-video plugin could watch and hear the program without moving from their computers.

Broadcasting a program worldwide is no big deal, but making it interactive is. To encourage viewer participation, an 800-number and an E-mail address flashed on the screen during the broadcast. The Web site also had the contact information.

Soloway's acquisition reform office has made many such broadcasts in the past. This one, however, was the first to specifically address the Defense Reform Initiative and to feature the Deputy Defense Secretary.

In the past, receiving broadcasts sometimes required ingenuity, Soloway said. One installation in California did not have a satellite dish. Members of an office there went to a local sports bar and persuaded the barkeep to aim his dish at the correct satellite so they could watch the show from his restaurant.

Others didn't need to go to such extremes. The Armed Forces Radio and Television Service piped the broadcast to overseas locations, and the broadcast ran on the Pentagon's closed circuit television network.

The production was a joint venture between Soloway's office and the Defense Reform Initiative office.

Editor's Note: This information is in the public domain at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news> on the World Wide Web.